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–Krishna Bista, Professor of Higher Education,  
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# ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERNATIONAL ACADEMICS

Challenges and Opportunities

EDITED BY

**JASVIR KAUR NACHATAR SINGH**

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United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India  
Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited  
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2022

Editorial matter and selection © 2022 Jasvir Kaur Nachatar Singh.  
Individual chapters © 2022 The authors.  
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### British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80117-513-5 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-80117-510-4 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-80117-512-8 (Epub)



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**Dr Muhammad Muftahu** is a Nigerian, who works as a Senior Lecturer, Deputy Director and Coordinator of the Global Higher Education Network (GHEN) at the National Higher Education Research Institute, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). He is also the Coordinator of the Professional Programme in Higher Education Leadership and Management, Co-Coordinator of Higher Education Access and Success research cluster, and Commission Member of the Academic Talent Management Project (ATM) 2020, Universiti Sains Malaysia. His research interest and expertise include Higher Education Sustainable Leadership and Management, Comparative and International Higher Education, Higher Education and Industry, Higher Education as Field of Study and Qualitative Methodology.

Muhammad has immensely contributed to the development of higher education as a discipline of study and practices through teaching, postgraduate supervision, research, and wide publication, which awarded him with several academic recognitions at home and abroad, including garnering international grants. Similarly, he is a member and a fellow of various higher education professional bodies and networks across the globe, such as the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE), United Kingdom, Nigeria Society for Higher Education Research and Development (NSHERD), Higher Education Research Association (HERA), Malaysian Society for Higher Education Policy and Research Development (PenDaPat), Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM), and the

Academy of Management Nigeria (AMN). Giving back to the community by promoting higher education research in Nigeria and national development, he founded the Nigerian Society for Higher Education Research and Development (NSHERD), – the first platform of its kind bringing various scholars of interest for researching higher education in Nigeria. Similarly, recognising his contribution earned him to be appointed as Chairman Visitation Panel, Kaduna State University (KASU) for the period of 2016–2020 which he completed with thoroughness and diligence.

**Yuhang Rong** serves as the Associate Vice President for Global Affairs and Associate Professor in Residence of Educational Leadership at the University of Connecticut (UConn). He represents UConn as its Senior Leader at the global research university consortium, Universitas 21. He oversees the State of Connecticut partnership with the German state of Baden-Wuerttemberg. Concurrently, he is the Vice Chair of the Board of Directors at the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) in Washington, DC; and he is a member of the Advisory Board for the Queen Rania Teacher Academy in Jordan. Yuhang earned his BA in English from East China Normal University (华东师范大学), MA in Education Administration from West Virginia University, and PhD in Professional Higher Education Administration from the University of Connecticut.

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**Dr Ashleigh-Jane Thompson** is a Senior Lecturer and Program Director in the La Trobe Business School, where she is involved with the sport management programme. Throughout her academic career, she has developed and taught a variety of Undergraduate and Masters coursework subjects and has supervised several Masters and PhD students. She is an award-winning researcher whose primary research activities are in

the fields of sport communication, sport marketing, fan engagement and sport innovation. Her research has a theoretical and practical impact both nationally and internationally. She is an active researcher within La Trobe's Centre for Sport and Social Impact and collaborates with other researchers within Australia and internationally. Ashleigh-Jane is also currently the Vice-President of the Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand (SMAANZ). In addition to her scholarly pursuits, she maintains active connections with the sport industry by partnering with sport organisations for research projects, as well as working in media operations at national and international sporting events and serving as a Director on various sport organisation boards. She also regularly engages with the media as an outlet to translate her research and encourage public dialogue and debate.



# PREFACE

The COVID-19 pandemic and its ongoing challenges continue to change academia as we know it. As time passes by, we have discovered that, in the end, what changes take place, when and why depend on the conscious decisions we make as staff members in each of our roles – from our particular vantage point in teaching and learning, research and service – and, most importantly, on our ability to distinguish what is urgent (survival) from our longer time horizons (growing and thriving, as we hope).

This new precarious environment has also brought to the fore academia's most troubling assumptions, some of which were already being defied by a growing consciousness about global and systemic inequalities, and a recognised need to re-orient our livelihoods as a consequence of environmental degradation and climate change. As much as we pride ourselves of being in 'the ivory tower' watching the world at distance and commenting/engaging with it as needed, we are inextricably embedded in that same world. We are affected by it, one way or the other, and our passivity legitimises what is noble and troubling about it. We are called, then, to participate in our own ways in the calls for action, conversations, decisions and new paths ahead that could result from positioning ourselves as agents of change.

I reflect on these overall trends as I read this book and consider the individual experiences that lie at the heart of the editor and authors' work. I am an international academic myself – someone born in another country, who grew up and was educated in another socio-cultural milieu, who navigated unfamiliar and uncertain pathways to study and work overseas, and who serendipitously arrived at the same maze of corridors of La Trobe's beautiful Bundoora Campus in Melbourne. There, I met Dr Jasvir Singh, my colleague and the editor of this volume, alongside other colleagues who had also 'come from away' and hailed from a wide range of backgrounds. Despite the wide diversity of life and professional experiences we embodied and carried, we all acknowledge many things in common with one another as 'international academics'.

Here we are, living and working in a system conditioned, pushed or pulled by 'a variety of structural factors', which means constantly living on the edge in practice – first as students, then as academics; constantly assessing our strengths and limitations, yearning for a sense of stability. Hoping for (and living) career dreams in our respective disciplines and programmes, whilst putting between brackets (and addressing) all sorts of financial and logistical problems and major pending questions – including whether we belong, or not, whether we speak the language, or not, whether we 'mask' successfully in a cultural environment different than ours, or not, whether we are able to survive (or let alone thrive), or not. And so forth. Day by day, often for years, encouraged to think about ourselves as being privy to the wealth of opportunities of global academia, a world where any of those troubling dilemmas often go unrecognised – and hence unaddressed – by institutions and the academic community in a broader sense.

Yet, at the same time that those problems are real and require attention, it behoves us to consider, highlight and celebrate the courage and effort of many international colleagues who – despite being caught in a maze of uncertainty and precarity – are also able to make the most of the opportunities at hand. Thus, the task of evaluation, recognition and critical analysis of the international academic should not only limit itself to denouncing problems but also to recognising accomplishments – as Jasvir Singh correctly points out in the introduction to this volume. That is, approaching the experiences of international academics with nuance and empathy, open to listening without reservations, connecting with what identifies all of us in this ever-changing environment. There is much to learn from the daily experiences of international academics who, like all of us, carry on their lives in an increasingly competitive and precarious academic environment. This was already the case before the pandemic, and it is even more the case nowadays.

As international academics face new barriers and difficulties in this new era – including even more uncertain job prospects, logistic difficulties, forced distancing from colleagues abroad and, more importantly, loved ones, among other challenges – it will be more important than ever to recognise their difficulties, but also their roles and unique contributions to the academic world and our respective institutions. This book is a major step in this direction. It is a must-read book for current and/or future international academics – whether thinking of short- or long-term mobility in academia. My most sincere congratulations to the editor and contributors around the world to this volume. This is one of the strengths of the book, as it draws on varied experiences and voices of international academics, globally. I look forward to the many stimulating conversations it will elicit and,

hopefully, the decisions and policies that it will help inspire in the future.

**Raúl Sánchez Urribarrí** is a Senior Lecturer in Crime, Justice and Legal Studies at the Department of Social Inquiry, La Trobe University. He has served as Coordinator of Short-Term International Mobility at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. He holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of South Carolina, an LLM from Cambridge University and a Law Degree from Universidad Católica Andrés Bello (Venezuela). His research focuses on democracy and the rule of law, and it has been published in a variety of outlets, including *The Journal of Politics*, *Law & Social Inquiry*, the *Annual Review of Law and Social Sciences* and *International Political Science Review*. He is a Non-Resident Research Fellow at Tulane University's Center for Inter-American Policy and Research, and a Co-Editor at *Thesis Eleven journal*. Currently, he serves as Chair of the Section on Venezuelan Studies (SVS) of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA).